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A DESCRIPTION

OF

MR. BURGES' MODELS

FOR THE

ADORNMENT OF ST. PAUL'S

NOW EXHIBITED AT

THE ROYAL ACADEMY

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The following description of Mr. Burges' Models for the adornment of St. Paul's is published with the view of facilitating their examination, and of explaining the principles on which they are constructed.

DESCRIPTION OF THE MODELS.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES.

Necessity of light and brightness.

The general principle on which Mr. Burges has constructed his models is the necessity of giving greater light and brightness and more colour to the Cathedral. The very foundation of all the attempts that have been made to 'adorn' the building, from the time of Sir Joshua Reynolds to that of Dean Milman and of the present day, has been the feeling that in its present state it is dull and heavy to an extent that is positively oppressive. The tone of the materials of which the Cathedral is built is not only sombre, but dull in the extreme; the texture of the stone renders it especially liable to the collection of dirt; the surface, from its very nature, absorbs instead of reflecting light; while the usual characteristics of an English—and, above all, of a London—atmosphere require conditions the very reverse of all that have been here enumerated.

How should brightness be given?

The first question, then, requiring settlement was the mode in which brightness should be given to the building. The cleansing process which has lately been applied to it has done much. It has shown how great an effect may be produced by the mere removal of dirt; but it has also shown that the nature of the material of which the Church is built can only to a very limited extent produce the desired effect, and it has also shown the necessity of a periodical repetition of the process in

order to produce even this limited effect. It was therefore necessary to consider whether the desired result might not be produced by the application of a material that could be easily cleaned, whose colour was brighter, and whose surface would reflect instead of absorbing light. The obvious answer was that marble would produce all the desired effects, and that a surface of marble might be advantageously substituted for a surface of stone. Polished marble is used in most Italian cinque-cento churches with any pretension to richness of decoration; and so deep, indeed, has always been the feeling that marble is the appropriate surface material, that even the imitation of marble, notwithstanding its incapacity for reflecting light, has been deemed allowable, although, as is the case in some portions of St. Peter's at Rome, the disappointment produced by the discovery that what appears to be marble is nothing but an imitation, excites a feeling of indignation.

Only by polished marble

Mr. Burges came, therefore, to the conclusion that in London, the wealthiest city in the world, marble should, in internal decoration, be substituted for stone. It was, however, obviously unnecessary to substitute a mass of marble for a mass of stone. Even with means almost unlimited, it would be a wasteful proceeding for an architect, when constructing a building of vast dimensions, to make use of so expensive a material, in the mass, when one of less cost would be equally stable, and could, without difficulty, and at a comparatively moderate cost, be furnished with a surface that would fulfil all the required conditions. He would use stone for stability, and a veneer of marble for artistic effect.

A veneer of marble sufficient.

Other general principles have also guided Mr. Burges

Materials.

in his plans of decoration. He has selected materials not easily perishable, and easily cleaned, such as mosaic, majolica, bronze, and marble.

These are used:

Artistic portions.

First, Where the individual work of an artist occurs, as in figure-work, arabesques, patterns, &c.

Secondly, Where particular tones of colour are employed, as in backgrounds to sculptured figures, ornaments, inscriptions, &c., and—

Thirdly, Where the decoration would be submitted to wear and tear, as in the pavement and lower portions of the fabric generally.

No cost to renew.

These, the artistic portions of the work, as well as those subjected to wear, would thus be practically imperishable, could be easily cleaned when required, and would occasion no further expense after the first cost.

Mechanical portions.

Those portions not requiring individual judgment for their renewal, such as gildings to capitals, mouldings, large surfaces of white, and white mouldings, would be gilt, and painted in the usual manner.

Renewal.

This, the mechanical portion of the decoration, could be renewed when required, without danger to the general effect.

DETAILS OF MODELS.

THE MARBLE VENEER.

Parts of nave, aisle, choir, and apse.

The first model is that of a half-bay of the nave and a bay of the aisle. The second is a bay of the choir, a bay of the north choir aisle, the ante-apse with aisle, and the apse.

Scale.

The whole is represented to a scale of half an inch to the foot.

The substitution of a surface of marble for a surface of stone, in certain internal parts of the building, being, then, the foundation of Mr. Burges' principle of decoration, the mode of application is as follows:—The principal piers and the aisle walls are to be thus treated. From the ground to the necking of the caps of the small pilasters, it is proposed to case the piers of the nave and choir arcades and the walls of the aisles with white Sicilian marble. Marble veneer. Main piers and aisle walls.

The veneer would be applied in thin slabs, so as not to interfere with the stability of the structure, and it is believed that the thickness proposed by Mr. Burges would not involve any risk. In order to avoid the disagreeable effect of a joint near the edge, betraying the want of thickness in the material, the cornerpieces of marble would be made L shaped, in horizontal section.

THE WALLS.

The predominance of white is thus made the great characteristic of what may perhaps be called the lower story of the nave of the Cathedral. The great pilasters in the nave are therefore treated in the same manner, but the flutes are partially filled in with coloured marble, the lower third black, and the two upper thirds red, as in various Genoese churches. Predominance of white. Treatment of great pilasters in nave.

The pilasters in the choir are entirely of rich red marble, the lower part of the flutes being filled in with black. The capitals in both cases are gilt, portions being burnished, in order to obviate the heaviness that might arise from so large a mass of one-coloured gold. In choir.

The little angels in the frieze, holding garlands of fruit and flowers, are in red and green bronze, and Frieze.

form a link to connect the colour of the pilasters with that of the attic and ribs above.

Panels.

The panels in the piers and walls are decorated with *opus sectile*, in geometrical figures, or with marble tarsia-work on a black ground, according to their position. The panels in the deep jambs of the aisle windows are filled in with such tarsia-work, having in the centre white marble bas-reliefs on gold ground, representing subjects in continuation of those depicted in the windows between them. On these panels space is left for inscriptions; and it is probable that these will be made use of for donations in memory of departed friends or distinguished persons, it being the object of the architect to encourage individual donations of portions of the decoration, as contributions to the completion of the whole on a single system. The panel under the east window of the choir aisle is intended to offer another opportunity for similar treatment. It is filled with a gilt bronze bas-relief, with blue enamel background, and is intended for a memorial of a missionary bishop. The nine panels under the apse windows are similarly of bronze, and represent severally our Lord as King (Matthew xxv. 40), and the Acts of Mercy.

Memorials & donations.

Extent to which colour is used.

It will thus be seen that there is no colour, excepting in the marble and the bronzes, below the cornice over the main arcade. Colour is used sparingly in the attic, above which it increases in richness, which culminates in the dome, although even there it is not intended that it shall attain the richness and depth of the decoration of the choir. Following the English custom, the choir is made very rich. Colour is here used *below* the main cornice, but with broad spaces of white, and the white decreases and is replaced by gold

and colour as the height rises, there being a minimum in the dome.

ARCADES, ETC. ABOVE MARBLE-WORK.

Arcades generally.

Proceeding upwards, we now come to those parts of the building which are above the intended marble-work. The nave arcade is painted white, but toned to avoid crudeness, with the mouldings and some portions of the cornice gilt; but where gilt ornaments occur on a gold ground, the latter is glazed with a reddish colour, and would then look like red gold.

Spandrels.

The spandrels are enriched with a pattern which is produced partially by sinking the present surface of stone, and partially by the addition of mouldings. As the decoration in this portion of the building is restricted to the use of white and gold, a flat surface, without texture, would have been poor in effect. The colour is concentrated into the centre of the spandrels by the introduction of shell-like niches of bright green marble, containing heads.

Soffits.

The soffits, or undersides of the arches, are at present ornamented with sunk coffers and panels, containing raised stone surfaces. It is proposed that these shall be carved, as such was evidently the intention of Sir Christopher Wren. The decoration is white and gold, with some dark blue in the ground of the coffers, so as to accentuate their depth.

Choir arcade.

In the choir arcade the spandrels are left flat, and decorated with mosaic, because, besides the white and gold, colour also is here used. In other respects the treatment is very similar to that of the corresponding portions of the nave arcade.

THE ATTIC STORY.

Generally.

The next portion of the building requiring consideration is the attic story. This is a very important and striking feature of the building, forming, as it does, the only continuous plane surface which runs along the whole length of the edifice, with the exception of the interruption of shallow piers at long intervals. It is divided into a series of large panels, forming a chain of framed spaces, connecting the feet of the great ribs that carry the domed vaulting surfaces.

Its importance.

Forms a chain round the building.

Several considerations point to a treatment like that of a frieze, composed of human figures, as the fitting decoration for these panels. These are—their prominent position; their being large spaces framed with deep mouldings, and therefore evidently intended by the architect to receive decoration of importance; and the absence, in their usual position, of those continuous horizontal plane surfaces (architrave and frieze) which are so important a characteristic of the Italian manner of building. They were suppressed by Sir Christopher Wren in order to gain height for the nave arcade, but he took care to supply the required horizontality of effect at a higher level, by giving importance to the attic. In the apse, however, where the architrave and frieze are in their proper position, the clerestory window is allowed to cut through the horizontal lines of the attic story.

Reasons for frieze treatment.

Continuous frieze suppressed in entablature.

Contrary case in apse.

The attic story, above the main cornice, is painted white, with some gilding on the cornice; and the mouldings round the panels are also gilt. The panels are filled with subjects, composed of figures on a smaller scale than that of the Prophets and Apostles in the windows above, forming, as it were, a 'predella' to

Treatment of attic story.

them, after the manner of the Italian altar-pieces of the best Renaissance period. The series of subjects below illustrate scenes from the life of the holy personage represented in the large space above.

Material. The material to be used is majolica, with the joints following the outlines of the drawing, in order to avoid the disagreeable effect produced by square tiles. The figures are white, lightly shaded with green, on a blue background, these retiring colours being selected to form a transition between the white, gold, and marble below, and the greater richness of colour in the windows and vaulting above.

Nave. Colour of subjects.

Colour in piers. The shallow piers, taking the transverse arches, are carved with arabesques gilt on a white ground. There can be but little doubt that Sir Christopher Wren intended eventually to carve the stone left projecting from the panels.

Choir. The attic story of the choir would be treated similarly to that of the nave, except that greater richness would be obtained by gilding portions of the plain faces between the panels, and substituting varied colour in the figures for the white and green of the nave.

Colour of subjects.

Piers. The arch piers would here be enriched by having red, instead of white, backgrounds to the gilded arabesques.

THE CLERESTORY.

Clerestory. The spandrels or wall surfaces on either side of the clerestory windows not being forms specially designed, but rather a result of the mode of construction—that is to say, of the vertical line of the window with its ornamental finish, of the horizontal line of the attic, and of the elliptical line of the pendentive of the vault—

Spandrels.

it has been deemed desirable not to emphasise these, as it were, accidental forms by borders or by panelling, but rather to treat the whole clerestory as a single wall-surface cut into and encroached upon. The greater portion is therefore treated as conventional masonry, the horizontal lines of which are valuable by giving apparently greater breadth to and binding together the whole composition. Gilt embellishments and inscriptions, with a little colour, are therefore introduced. As, in the actual work, the volutes at the base of the window-dressings carry down and support the vertical lines, so the seated figures on either side of the window echo the colour, and act as supporters to the standing figures in the glass.

Treatment.

Composition.

Colour. The greater portion of the spandrels is intended to be white, the position being one that would receive but little light, and would be rendered darker by contrast with the brightness of the windows. The figures, however, are intended to be fully coloured, in order to make them stand out as clearly as possible.

Choir clerestory. The choir clerestory is treated in exactly the same way as that of the nave, as the addition of colour would only render it darker, and perhaps even confused.

Material. The whole of the clerestory, being composed of large flat surfaces, would be executed entirely in mosaic.

THE VAULTS.

Nave. With reference to the vaults, all lines of construction, such as the transverse and longitudinal arches, enclosing lines of panels, are emphasised by the use of white and gold. The filling-in of the panels

General principles.

and pendentives is executed in colour enriched with gold. The pendentives are in mosaic. A border of white and gold, with a little green, encloses a full-sized figure of an angel, mostly white, with wings of gold and colour, on a blue ground with gold stars. Pendentives.

The flat domes, covering each a bay of the nave or choir, present in the actual building perfectly plain surfaces. These, being far more extensive than any others in the Cathedral, require therefore to be sub-divided, in order to bring the decorations into scale with the rest of the work. It is consequently proposed to enrich the surface by the addition of mouldings executed in plaster, a very favourite mode of treatment in the best part of the cinque cento period. The domes would be cut up by these into a series of panels or coffers, as in the lacunar vaults of the Romans and their Renaissance imitators. A similar treatment was adopted by Wren in the barrel-vault of the ante-apse, and the soffits over the aisle and apse windows. The mouldings and coffers would, however, be far lighter and shallower than Wren's, so as not to weight unduly the vaulting surfaces. Domes. Applied mouldings. Coffers. Vaults not weakened.

The colouring would be as laid down in the general principles ; the panels being filled with heads of cherubs and arabesques in brilliant colours. Colour.

The choir domes would be treated in a similar manner to those of the nave, but the forms of the surface decoration would be varied, and there would be more gold and colour, and less white. Choir domes. Colour.

The pendentives would have angels on gold, instead of blue, ground ; and their border would be of red and gold, instead of a broad one of white and gold. Pendentives.

The treatment of the aisle domes would be the same, respectively, as that of the nave and choir. Aisle domes.

Ante-apse.

The vault of the ante-apse consists at present of a broad arch or barrel-vault deeply coffered. It is proposed to decorate this in red, blue, and gold, and with thin white lines round the panels, so as to produce a rich effect.

THE APSE.

Apse generally.

The apse, if it be regarded as the culminating point of the Cathedral, should be decorated in the richest manner. White is therefore used more sparingly, while colour and gold are employed in large masses.

Principle of decoration.

But the principle of decoration is the same. The leading lines of construction are still emphasised by the use of white; the ornamental portions of these constructional lines, however, such as the arabesques on the ribs of the semi-dome, the panels in the rib-piers, and the frieze of the principal entablature, are in blue and gold.

Base of apse.

The lower portion of the apse is similar to that of the rest of the building, but rendered richer by the insertion of gilt bas-reliefs under the lower windows, as in the panels of the aisle walls.

Arcade. Addition of archivolt mouldings.

In the arcade there is at present no archivolt moulding marking the arch. Its absence is not much felt in its present colourless condition, but it becomes indispensable when attention is drawn to individual features by decoration. It has therefore been supplied, and, being a constructional form, decorated with white and

Spandrels.

gold. The spandrel between the arch and the architrave is all gilt. The garlands of fruits and ribbons are glazed in transparent colours on gold, the shields bearing the instruments of Our Lord's Passion on a black ground.

Frieze.

It is proposed to insert in the frieze a gold inscrip-

tion, on a blue ground, consisting of the following words, selected from a passage in the Communion service :—'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts; heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.' The portion of the Liturgy from which it is taken renders it most fitting for its position round the Holy Table, while, at the same time, it interprets in words the scheme of the decoration of the apse-dome and of the vault of the last bay of the choirs—which two would always be seen together at a single glance—viz. the Seraphim, Cherubim, and Angels in adoration of the Saviour. The figure of Our Lord in the act of blessing, which occupies the centre compartment of the apse-dome, is of gigantic size, in accordance with the tradition of Early Christian Art. It would, consequently, be plainly visible throughout the entire length of the Cathedral. The whole of these figures would be executed in mosaic, on gold ground.

Inscription.

Why chosen.

Dome.

Large figure of Christ.

Material.

PAVEMENT.

As regards the pavement, it is constructed of marble, the design simple and broad—*opus sectile*, in large pieces, only being used. There is a white path on either side of the nave, the centre consisting of a coloured pattern of black, yellow, red, and white—the whole suggesting the idea of a broad carpet running the entire length of the Cathedral, and leading up to the altar.

Pavement.

Nave.

The main tone of the aisle pavements is also white, subdivided and panelled to emphasise the plan, and echo the architecture of the vault above.

Aisles.

The general treatment of the choir pavement is the same as that of the nave, but richer in character. *Opus sectile* is employed in smaller pieces, with heads and

Choir.

arabesques introduced sparingly. The latter is executed in incised marble, filled in with black cement.

Ante-apse. The pavement of the ante-apse is of *opus sectile*, very rich, of the character of that in the Church of the Madonna dei Miracoli, at Venice—a beautiful specimen of late quattro-cento work. In the centres of panels are figures in *opus vermiculatum*, to form a transition to

Apse. The pavement of the apse. This is all *opus vermiculatum*, representing four streams flowing from the altar, with harts drinking, flowers, and so forth, the whole being emblematic of Paradise, as so frequently seen in Early Christian Art at Ravenna, Rome, and elsewhere.

THE GLASS.

Stained glass windows. The windows are the only remaining point requiring consideration. It is considered essential to the plan of adornment adopted by Mr. Burges, to substitute new glass for that now existing in the present windows. Were any student of the model to remove its windows for an instant, and then, after impressing the effect on his mind, either replace them, or substitute, temporarily, any other, and especially darker or deeper coloured, glass, he would at once see that the present treatment of the windows is absolutely necessary to the whole design. The windows now in the Cathedral are of Munich construction, and obstruct rather than transmit light ; they are out of harmony with the proposed system of 'adornment,' and they do not come up to the standard of excellence attained by many English artists and manufacturers. They are dull and opaque in colour, and overladen with shading in black and brown, so as to produce the effect of transparent oil paintings, or trans-

Objections to Munich glass.

parent blinds, rather than of windows filled with brilliant white and coloured glass.

Style of glass considered desirable.

It being necessary to introduce as great a flood of light as possible into a huge building—which, from the comparatively small size of its windows, and these, too, not splayed, and the habitual gloom of a London atmosphere, is apt to appear dark and sad-looking—the refracting and jewel-like qualities of glass should be utilised to the utmost. In the designs shown in the model, white glass therefore is extensively used, with occasional bits of colour, sufficient to define the subject and echo the masses of colour in the wall and other decorations.

Subjects. Apse.

The subjects selected for the apse windows are the invocations of the Litany in the Book of Common Prayer—

1. The Agony.
2. The Crucifixion.
3. The Burial.
4. The Resurrection.
5. The Ascension.
6. The Coming of the Holy Ghost.

The last three being in the clerestory.

Nave.

The subjects of the nave windows are taken from the Old Testament, viz. : In the aisle, Isaac blessing Jacob ; in the clerestory, the Prophet Obadiah.

Choir.

In the choir, the subjects are from the New Testament. In the clerestory, the Apostles St. Peter and St. Andrew on the north side, and St. James Major and St. John on the south. In the aisle, Our Lord's entry into Jerusalem ; and at the east end of the aisle, the Conversion of St. Paul.

Conclusion.

In examining the model, it must not be forgotten that it is seen under very different conditions from those of the Cathedral itself. It is exposed to a blaze of light, instead of being darkened by the surrounding parts of the building.

The estimated cost is as follows:—

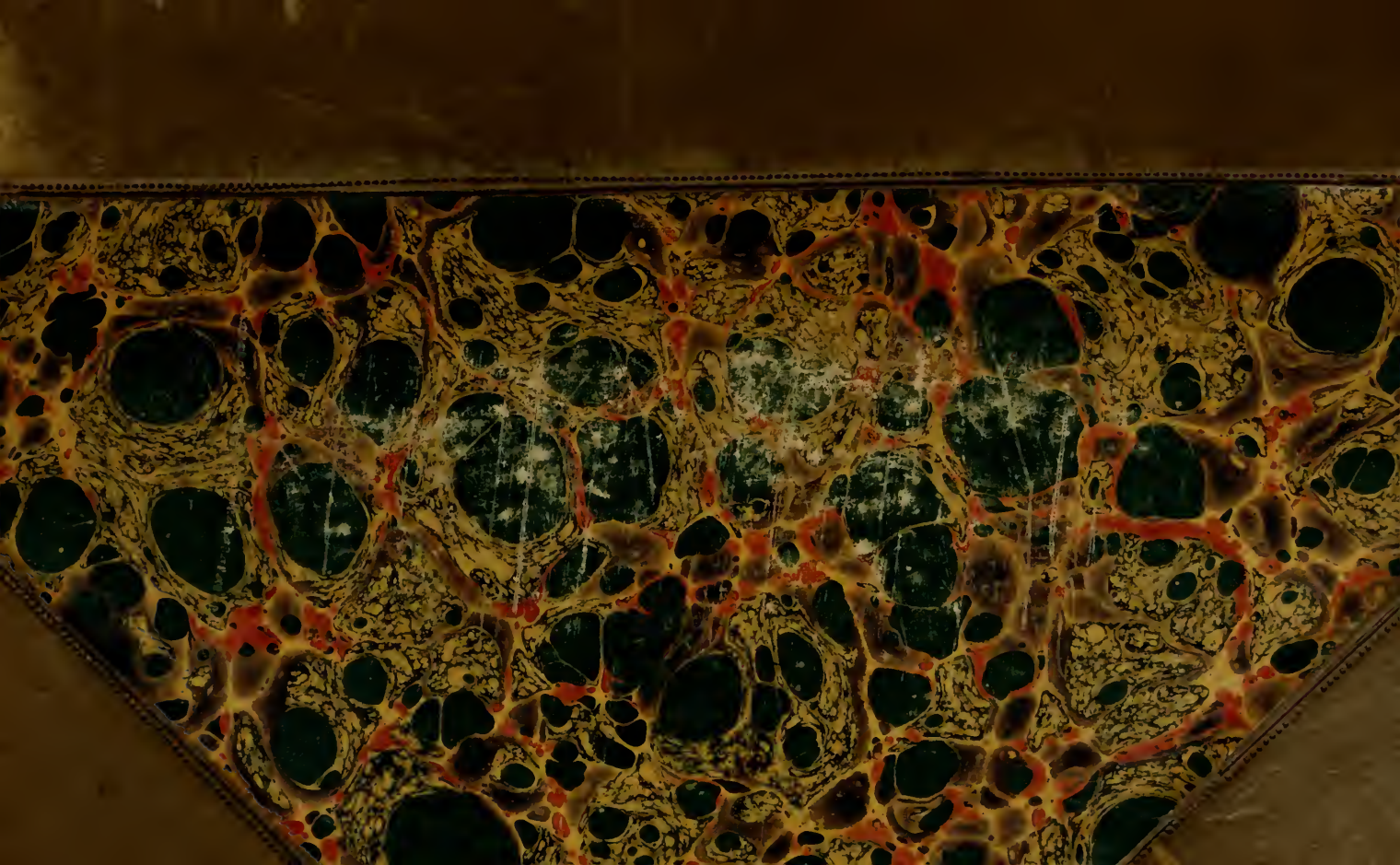
A half bay of the nave, and a bay of the nave-aisle, is estimated to cost about £11,000.

A whole bay of the choir, and its north aisle, about £14,000.

The apse, including the two great pilasters and the ante-apse or sacrarium, with its north aisle, about £23,000.

Thus all the portions represented in the two models are estimated to cost about £48,000.

A rough estimate has been made of the total cost of adorning the whole Cathedral, amounting to about £400,000.

Extract from a Letter from the Dean of St. Paul's to the Architect in 1668.

'And then for the procuring contributions to defray this, we are so sanguine as not to doubt of it if we could but once resolve what we would do and what that would cost. So that the only part of your letter we demur to is, the method you propound of declaring, first, what money we would bestow, and then designing something just of that expense. For, quite otherwise, *the way their Lordships resolve upon is to frame a design handsome and noble, and suitable to all the ends of it, and to the reputation of the City, and the Nation, and to take it for granted that money will be had to accomplish it.*'